

# Council Plan 2024-27



'The Council's vision for Middlesbrough is a thriving, healthier, safer and more ambitious place where people want to live, work, invest, and visit. We will support our residents to live fulfilling lives, to ensure that our communities thrive.'

## Foreword

### Welcome to our Council Plan for the 2024-27 period.

The Council has experienced lots of change following May 2023's elections and this plan sets out the new administration's visions and ambitions.

Like most local authorities, Middlesbrough faces lots of challenges. As a Council, we're determined to work with local people, our partners and businesses to overcome them.

We are also working closely with government and other bodies to make changes to our culture. There are problems from the past we are determined to resolve so we can look to the future with confidence.

We will recover, reset and deliver for the people of Middlesbrough.

By recovering our financial position, we will put the Council on a stronger footing for the future.

By resetting our priorities, we will ensure our attention is focused on things that matter to people and businesses.

With those foundations in place the Council will be able to put all its energy into delivering services that people value.

The Council's vision for Middlesbrough is a thriving, healthier, safer and more ambitious place where people want to live, work, invest, and visit. We will support our residents to live fulfilling lives, to ensure that our communities thrive.

While acknowledging the difficulties and societal problems that people face, we must also promote Middlesbrough as an area where great things happen.

Our town centre hosts thousands of people on a regular basis whether it be for football, live music, or the various cultural festivals we're proud to play a part in.

We're home to innovative companies that do business on the world stage and we boast award-winning educational institutions preparing our young people for prosperous lives.

Middlesbrough is a brilliant town, and we must use the talent, pride and positivity of our people to make the most of the opportunities that come our way.

Clearly, there's a lot of work to get through as we set about transforming the way we do things.

We believe this Council Plan can help create a fair, welcoming, and thriving place.

**Chris Cooke**  
Elected Mayor of  
Middlesbrough

**Clive Heaphy**  
Chief Executive



**Chris Cooke**, Elected  
Mayor of Middlesbrough



**Clive Heaphy**, Interim  
Chief Executive.

# Middlesbrough's challenges and opportunities

**1.** Middlesbrough is a lively and exciting place with an increasingly diverse population. Approximately 18% of our people are of an ethnic minority.

We are proud that our 2023 residents' survey found increasing numbers of people think Middlesbrough is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together



**2.** We're the heart of the Tees Valley with 800,000 people living within a 30-minute radius. We're a busy place with lots happening



**3.** Our population of around 144,000 lives in an area of just 35 square miles. Roughly 19 people live on each football pitch size of land making it the most densely populated part of the North East



**4.** Middlesbrough is a vibrant place with a strong sense of community



**5.** Our population is younger than the regional and national averages



**6.** We must ensure our future workforce has the right skills so we can attract investment



**7.** Life expectancy and healthy life expectancy for men and women are both lower than national averages



**8.** We must transform our services in the face of reductions in government funding and declining resident satisfaction



Sources:  
 · Office for National Statistics 2021 Census  
 · Middlesbrough Council Resident Survey 2023  
 · Indices of Deprivation 2019

# Our vision and priorities

## We will thrive

Our vision for Middlesbrough is a thriving, healthier, safer and more ambitious place where people want to live, work, invest, and visit. We will support our residents to live fulfilling lives, to ensure that our communities thrive.



# 1

## A successful and ambitious town

Maximising economic growth, employment and prosperity in an inclusive and environmentally sustainable way.

# 2

## A healthy place

Helping our residents to live longer, healthier lives.

# 3

## Safe and resilient communities

Creating a safer environment where residents can live more independent lives.

# 4

## Delivering best value

Changing how we operate, to deliver affordable and cost-effective outcomes for residents and businesses.





# A successful and ambitious town

Maximising economic growth, employment and prosperity in an inclusive and environmentally sustainable way.

## Aims:

### Attract and grow businesses to increase employment opportunities

Middlesbrough is home to thriving companies in innovative industries who compete on the world stage. To ensure we continue to be an attractive place to start or build a business, we will work to grow the range of employment opportunities. We will attract new businesses and support existing ones to grow, increasing the links between employers and job seekers.

### Improve attainment in education and skills

Our town boasts award-winning education institutions including Teesside University, Middlesbrough College and the Northern School of Art. We have dozens of wonderful schools led by inspirational teachers. We will work alongside these organisations to ensure skills provision is focused on the future needs of the economy and that our residents are equipped for work.

### Ensure housing provision meets local demand

Our population is growing and we need to have homes that meet all types of needs and aspirations. Housing provided through the Council must promote and support independent living. Services for homeless people will be safe and dignified, supporting access into long-term sustainable accommodation.

## How will we know we are delivering?

We need to increase the proportion of our residents that are economically active. 45.4% of residents are economically inactive compared to 39.1% nationally (ONS 2021 Census).

We track the number of businesses based here and the sectors they operate in.

Our residents need support to find work. 15.3% have either never worked or are long term unemployed, compared to 8.5% nationally (ONS 2021 Census).

We need to have more well paid, secure jobs in the town. Currently, those in employment are more likely to work in sales, care, leisure or manual jobs when compared to regional and national averages.

We need more roles in senior management positions and professional and technical occupations.

Increasing our skills base is key to attracting businesses and improving job prospects. Currently, 23.9% of residents have no qualifications, compared to 20.3% regionally and 18.1% nationally.

26.4% of residents have a Level 4 equivalent qualification or higher, compared to 28.6% regionally and 33.9% nationally.

We track the number of new homes that are delivered and the number of affordable homes. We monitor the levels of homelessness and the circumstances of people at the risk of homelessness.



# A healthy place



Helping our residents to live longer, healthier lives.

## Aims:

### Improve life chances of our residents by responding to health inequalities

Using our Family Hub model, we will support families to secure the best start in life for children.

We will improve children's readiness to learn and help them develop strong foundations for success at school.

Early intervention and support for families will prevent issues escalating and build resilience.

Through our Public Health Strategy we will work with partners to increase the prevention and early detection of disease and act on the structural factors that drive ill health.

Adult Social Care Services will further develop early intervention and prevention services to reduce the need for social care assessment.

We will consistently promote the conditions for improved health and wellbeing to users of our services and their carers.

### Protect and improve our environment

Through our Green Strategy we will continue to drive up recycling rates and encourage our residents to join with us in protecting our environment, green spaces and parks.

### Promote inclusivity for all

To ensure the principle of fairness is at the heart of everything we do, we will work together with communities and partners to develop solutions that improve outcomes for all.

We will always consider the impact our policies, strategies and decision making have on health inequalities.

### Reduce poverty

We will work with partners to support our residents out of poverty and improve community resilience to prevent people falling into poverty.

Meeting this challenge is central to all of the ambitions within the Council Plan.



## How will we know we are delivering?

We track the percentage increase of families who are engaging with the Family Hub service, the percentage of eligible families supported to take up their funded place for two year olds and the number of children reached each month via the literacy pathway.

Life expectancy at birth in Middlesbrough is 75.4 for males and 79.8 for females, compared to 79.3 and 83.1 nationally. Healthy life expectancy is also lower than national averages. We must work to close the gaps.

56.5% of over-16s in Middlesbrough are classed as 'active', taking part in sport and physical activity for over 150 minutes per week. This compares to 67.3% nationally. Obesity and

overweight rates for both children and adults are higher than the national average.

Promoting and supporting healthier lifestyles can influence these measures that impact on people's health.

We track resident satisfaction on environmental issues, including maintenance, parks and green spaces, via the Resident Survey.

We have statistics for amounts of waste sent for refuse, recycling and composting.

Based on the 2019 Indices of Deprivation, Middlesbrough is the fifth most deprived council area in England. This measure is due to be updated in 2025.

# Safe and resilient communities

Creating a safer environment where residents can live more independent lives.



## Aims:

### Support for adults to be independent for longer

We will improve access to advice and information for adults and informal carers.

We will develop and expand our use of assistive technology and reablement to minimise the need for ongoing care.

We will develop the choice of accommodation and support options for vulnerable adults to promote independent living, reducing reliance on residential care.

### Improved transport and digital connectivity

Our transport infrastructure will meet the needs of our residents and businesses and also support the town's green agenda by increasing the number of electric vehicle charging points.

We will work to improve digital connectivity, including by allowing residents to access Council services in the most convenient way.

### Promotion of new ideas and community initiatives

We will develop an approach that empowers individuals and groups to build resilient and thriving communities.

### Reducing crime and antisocial behaviour

We will work to reduce crime and antisocial behaviour across the town, allowing residents to live safer lives.

## How will we know we are delivering?

Middlesbrough has consistently had the highest crime rate in the Cleveland Police area for the past five years. We must narrow the gap between our town and the rest of the Tees Valley.

We track the number of adults whose long-term support needs are met by admission to residential and nursing care homes.

We track the number of over-65s who receive reablement/rehabilitation services after discharge from hospital.

We monitor the number of people who use public transport and the average minimum travel time to reach key services by different modes of travel.



# Delivering best value

Changing how we operate, to deliver affordable and cost-effective outcomes for residents and businesses.

## Aims:

### Ensuring robust and effective corporate governance

It will be a priority over the life of this plan to provide government and the Council's auditors with assurances the Council has effectively addressed concerns as set out in the Best Value notice and subsequent statutory recommendations.

### Set a balanced revenue budget and Medium Term Financial Plan to restore financial resilience and sustainability

The Council is required by law to manage its annual revenue expenditure within its available financial resources.

It also has a Best Value duty to deliver a balanced Medium Term Financial Plan over three to five years to demonstrate financial stability and sustainability in delivering its wider Council Plan objectives.

The Council faces a significant risk that it is unable to balance its revenue expenditure with its available resources in 2024/25, and over the medium term to 2026/27, without fundamental transformation and redesign of services.

The Council's financial resilience is currently weak due to its critically low level of usable revenue reserves which constrain its ability to respond effectively to unforeseen financial pressures.

The Council's Medium Term Financial Planning and annual budget setting framework provides the affordability envelope within which the Council's plans will need to be developed in order to secure financial sustainability.

This includes the requirement to plan to rebuild revenue reserves to strengthen financial resilience that will enable more stable financial planning and management in delivering wider objectives and priorities over the medium term.



## How will we know we are delivering?

By demonstrating successful cultural transformation and financial recovery and resilience, we will aim for the removal of the Best Value notice within the period of this plan.

We will deliver the action plan in response to the external auditor's statutory recommendations and move towards an unqualified set of accounts within the period of this plan.

Monthly budget monitoring takes place with Executive Member oversight.

The Section 151 officer will assess the financial health of the council, including a risk assessment

of the adequacy of reserves annually as part of medium term financial planning and budget setting.

Audits, risks to the organisation, complaints, programme and project management, health and safety and information security incidents are all tracked.

Compliance with Freedom of Information Act and Subject Access Request legislation to ensure we are demonstrating transparency and accountability by the way in which we respond to requests.

# Transformation

We are working to 'recover, reset and deliver' to ensure that we deliver modern cost-effective services, focused on the needs of residents and arranged around individuals, their families, carers and communities.

We will be an inclusive and supportive Council where staff thrive, prosper and feel valued in their work.



## Aims:

Transformation is not only a response to challenges, but a proactive strategy to shape a future-ready organisation.

It is a catalyst for positive change, driving the organisation forwards.

In embracing this ethos, the Council aspires to create a culture that thrives on adaptability and continuous improvement, ensuring its resilience in the face of ongoing challenges and changes.

Our transformation is focused on key areas and priorities:

**Service delivery:** we are committed to adopting new approaches to the design and delivery of services to better meet the needs of our residents.

**Controls and efficiencies:** our emphasis is on driving improved controls and efficiency measures across the organisation, ensuring streamlined processes and resource optimisation.

**Demand management:** through implementing effective demand management measures, we aim to optimise resource allocation and target our interventions precisely where they are needed most

**Outcomes:** ultimately, the goal of our transformation is to deliver improved outcomes for our residents, communities and businesses, elevating the overall quality of life.

## How will we know we are delivering?

In recognising the evolving landscape and dynamic nature of our operating environment, the Council is dedicated to embracing innovative approaches in the design and delivery of services.

This commitment involves new strategies, partnerships and collaborative efforts with stakeholders.

To methodically track our progress and ensure the successful delivery of our transformative vision, we will establish a comprehensive Transformation Portfolio. This portfolio will serve as a structured framework, outlining a range of projects and programmes designed to implement our initiatives effectively.

Our approach will be both strategic and adaptive, examining short and long-term transformative opportunities to ensure that our efforts align with the evolving needs of our community and the broader landscape. Through this approach, we will proactively gauge our success and respond to emerging opportunities and challenges.





  
**Middlesbrough**  
moving forward

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